

February 18, 2005

**FORMER HOTEL OWNER SENTENCED TO 30 MONTHS
IN PRISON FOR BANK FRAUD AND TAX FRAUD**

ROCKFORD – PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; ROBERT D. GRANT, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and CHRISTOPHER PIKELIS, Acting Special Agent-In-Charge of the Chicago Field Office of the Internal Revenue Service–Criminal Investigation (“IRS-CI”), today made the following announcement:

Today, in federal court in Rockford, United States District Judge Philip G. Reinhard sentenced **MICHAEL J. BRISSON**, 47, 7312 Ashton Villa, Rockford, Illinois, to 30 months in prison, without parole, on Brisson’s convictions for bank fraud, filing false claims for federal tax refunds, and failing to pay over to the IRS employment taxes that had been collected from the employees of a hotel he owned and operated. Judge Reinhard also ordered Brisson to pay \$492,843.73 to Busey Bank.

In October of 2000, Brisson signed a contract to purchase a hotel located in Bloomington, Illinois, known as the Empire Inn, later known as the Ramada–Bloomington. As part of his guilty plea on November 2, 2004, Brisson admitted that, in order to generate the \$100,000 he needed for the down-payment on this hotel, he conducted a check-kite during January 2001. Specifically, Brisson admitted that by making carefully timed deposits of non-sufficient funds (“NSF”) checks into three business accounts he controlled, he created the illusion that three accounts that had positive balances of more than \$100,000. Brisson admitted that he used the false balances created by this check-kite to fund his \$100,000 down-payment on the hotel.

In the spring of 2001, Brisson obtained a \$3.5 million loan from Busey Bank, of Bloomington, Illinois, to fund his purchase and remodeling of the Empire Inn. At his plea hearing, Brisson admitted that he defrauded Busey Bank in connection with that loan. First, Brisson admitted that when he applied for the loan, he made false statements to the bank regarding his assets, the financial condition of the hotel, and the amount of money he had personally invested in the hotel. Secondly, Brisson admitted that he further defrauded Busey Bank by secretly transferring approximately \$526,155 of the hotel’s room rents to a bank account that Brisson controlled in Rockford. Brisson acknowledged that he used approximately \$388,048 of those illegally removed funds to pay his personal expenses, while he concealed this fraudulent conduct from Busey Bank.

Brisson also admitted that he failed to pay to the IRS federal taxes that were withheld from the paychecks of the employees of the Empire Inn/Ramada–Bloomington. Specifically, Brisson admitted that he failed to pay the IRS \$239,472.01 in federal taxes that had been withheld from the hotel employees' wages during 2001 and 2002.

Brisson further admitted that on February 18, 2003, he filed with the IRS two fraudulent requests for federal income tax refunds. On his 2001 federal return, Brisson claimed he was entitled to a refund of \$86,075 in federal taxes that had been withheld from his salary at the Empire Inn/Ramada–Bloomington. On his 2002 federal return, Brisson claimed he was entitled to a refund of \$77,611, which had been withheld from his salary at the hotel. During his guilty plea, Brisson admitted that he knew that \$0 had been paid to the IRS from his hotel salary during both 2001 and 2002.

The case was investigated by the Rockford office of the FBI and Chicago office of IRS-CI. The case was prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney SCOTT A. VERSEMAN.

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